



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

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Ref: DO0452-03
August 11, 2003

To All Interested Parties:

This final environmental impact statement was prepared by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) and is available for public review. The Final EIS describes five alternative approaches to the future of wolf conservation and management in Montana. One alternative describes a continuation of the existing federal program, three alternatives describe a program in which FWP would assume management responsibility upon the wolf's removal from the endangered species list, and one alternative describes a program in which FWP would assume some management responsibility should delisting be delayed. The Final EIS presents the expected environmental consequences of each of the five alternative actions.

FWP released a Draft EIS for review and public comment on March 12, 2003. A total of 5,500 comments were received during the comment period, which ended May 12, 2003. The public was offered the opportunity to provide oral comments at 14 community work sessions held in Billings, Glasgow, Avon, Missoula, Bozeman, Gardiner, Butte, Dillon, Ennis, Great Falls, Kalispell, Whitefish, Rexford and Thompson Falls during the months of March, April and May. The public was also offered the opportunity to provide written comments by returning pre-printed postcards, writing a letter, or sending an E-mail through the FWP website.

As a result of the comments received from the public, the Montana Wolf Management Advisory Council, and the FWP Commission, corrections and clarifications to the draft, as well as some new information, are incorporated into this Final EIS. Those changes are reflected in the body of the document. A representative sample of written letters and oral comments offered by the public, as well as FWP's responses, are presented in Appendix 5.

Following distribution of this Final EIS, FWP will decide which of the five alternatives to adopt. FWP recommends selection of Alternative 2, Updated Council, with the changes contained in the Final EIS. The alternative ultimately selected will become Montana's Final Gray Wolf Conservation and Management Plan. I can make this decision no sooner than 15 days after releasing the Final EIS to the public.

Additional information, or a copy of the Final EIS, may be obtained via the Internet at www.fwp.state.mt.us, or by writing to Wildlife Division, Montana FWP, P.O. Box 200701, Helena, MT 59620-0701.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "M. Jeff Hagener", is written over a light-colored background.

M. Jeff Hagener
Director